

LB 41
.G69
Copy 1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. LB41

Shelf .G69

PRESENTED BY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



THE
CULTIVATION OF THE IMAGINATION.

An Address

DELIVERED BY THE

RT. HON. GEORGE J. GOSCHEN, M.P.,

AT THE

LIVERPOOL INSTITUTE, LIVERPOOL,

ON THE 29TH NOVEMBER, 1877.



LONDON :
EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

1878.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

at Shofford

With the compliments of

Edw. G. Allen

THE
CULTIVATION OF THE IMAGINATION.

An Address

DELIVERED BY THE

RT. HON. GEORGE J. GOSCHEN, M.P.,

AT THE

LIVERPOOL INSTITUTE, LIVERPOOL,

ON THE 29TH NOVEMBER, 1877.



LONDON :

EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

1878.

LB41
G69

THE

Cultivation of the Imagination.

THE scope of this Institute is so wide that it offers a very large choice of subjects to those who address the students on these occasions, and I dare say it often happens that those who come here to address you take advantage of the opportunity to ventilate some educational hobby of their own. The presidents who have taken this chair in succession have certainly not all recommended the same kind of studies or taken the same line generally in their addresses on education ; and perhaps you will wonder what will be the line which he who is presiding on this occasion is likely to take. I have seen some of the addresses which have been delivered on previous occasions—addresses uttered by gentlemen who could speak with an educational authority which I could not command. Some have passed useful and practical

criticisms on the books used by you and on special courses of intellectual study. Others, speaking with regard to science and art, have given most valuable advice in connection with those departments of this Institute which are connected with South Kensington. I do not propose to follow quite the same course ; I wish to speak to you this evening as a man of business, but I hope I may say as a man of business who knows what he owes to a public school and University education.

I am about, then, to address you as a man of business, and, as I am speaking to the youth of this business city of Liverpool, and am bound to bear in mind that a great many of you are connected with business of one kind or another, I dare say you will expect that I am prepared to make a good business-like speech ; that I am about to recommend, in preference, the study of modern languages, of book-keeping, and of arithmetic ; and that I shall certainly warn you against those studies of which many people say—"What is their use ?" And perhaps you may think that I shall wind up with some eloquent generalisations, speak of the danger of foreign competition with regard to our trade, point out to you that you must increase your taste and knowledge so

as to be able to compete more successfully with foreign countries ; and finally appeal to you on behalf of technical education and sweeping reforms in your commercial schools. If your expectation is that such is the course I shall adopt this evening, possibly you may be disappointed. To use a familiar expression, this is not at all the line which I propose to take. I need not assure you that I am conscious of your local surroundings. I believe I know, or at least can imagine, the future that many of you intend to carve out for yourselves. I know the connection of Liverpool, and of Liverpool men, with business ; but, nevertheless, conscious as I am of these considerations, I shall not hesitate to place some opinions before you as regards certain educational ideas, and certain sides of training, which may at first sight surprise you, but which I shall nevertheless ask you very confidently to lay to heart.

I wish to bring out very clearly a point of view on which I have a strong feeling. I wish to warn you of the danger of a too utilitarian education, and to insist on other tests as to the value of the instruction you receive besides its direct and immediate bearing on your prospects in life. If

your aim in connection with this Institute is mainly professional, even in the best sense of the word—if it is directed less to your whole lives than to your careers—if your exclusive object is to qualify yourselves for bread-winning—a high and worthy object, but not the only object, of education even to the poorest man ; if such are your aims, and the aims of those who influence you, possibly there will be some head-shaking over my address this evening. For I stand here to plead a different cause, though certainly not an antagonistic cause to what I have described. I have read many addresses on the subject of technical education—speeches in which useless branches of study are denounced ; and doubtless we have been behindhand in many respects. We know the splendid work done by many devoted friends of education who are determined that the producing powers of this country shall not be hampered in the race by the want of that special knowledge and taste in which our neighbours may be apt to outstrip us. I honour them, and wish them “ God-speed ;” but, at the same time, I wish to remember that there is another side yet to educational work. I hold that in intellectual matters, as well as in religious life, man cannot live on

bread alone. I wish one of the key-notes of what I may say to you this evening to be—that a livelihood is not a life. Education must deal with your lives as well as qualify you for your livelihoods. I think you will hold that education must do more for you than enable you to win your bread, outstrip your neighbours, increase your business, and enable you to marry and bring up a family. I want education to ennoble, to brighten, and to beautify your lives. I wish it to increase your pleasures and your powers of happiness. I wish it to multiply your resources. I wish education to do that for the life which lies beyond and outside of your own work which, by common consent, it must do for your work itself. And, therefore, while others plead on behalf of useful knowledge—and mind, I sympathise with them as well—I wish a hearing to be given also to another side of education which may not have an immediate marketable use, but which, nevertheless, you cannot afford to neglect. I wish to speak to-night on behalf of the cultivation of the imaginative faculties in the broadest sense of the term; and I am not afraid to speak thus before a Liverpool audience and as a business man, because I will not admit an antagonism between business and

cultivation ; I will not admit that the cultivation of the imaginative faculties disqualifies men and women for the practical duties of life. Indeed, I hold that the cultivation of the imagination amongst all classes whom such an education can reach is not only important to the young themselves as increasing their happiness, but important to the nation as qualifying them to become better citizens and fitting them to take a useful and noble part in our national duties. And I beg the most humble and poorest amongst you not to think I am going to talk over your heads to-night. I address these words in favour of the cultivation of the imagination to the poorest and most humble in the same way that I address them to the wealthiest and those who have the best prospects in life. I will try not to make the mistake which doctors commit when they recommend patients in receipt of £2 a week to have recourse to champagne and a short residence at the seaside.

In what sense, then, do I use the word imagination? Johnson's Dictionary shall answer. I wish you particularly to note the answer Johnson gives as regards the meaning of "imagination." He defines it as "the power of forming ideal

pictures ; ” “ the power of representing absent things to ourselves and to others.” Such is the power which I am going to ask you, confidently, to cultivate in your schools, by your libraries, at home, by every influence which I can gain for the cause ; and I hope I shall be able to carry you with me, and show you why you should cultivate that power. I repeat, it is the power of forming ideal pictures, and of representing absent things to yourselves and to others. That is the sense in which I shall use the word imagination in the course of my address. Now, follow out this thought, and I think I can make my meaning clear. Absent things ! Take history. History deals with the things of the past. They are *absent*, in a sense, from your minds—that is to say, you cannot see them ; but the study of history qualifies you and strengthens your capacity for understanding things that are not present to you, and thus I wish to recommend history to you as a most desirable course of study. Then, again, take foreign countries — travels. Here, again, you have matters which are absent, in the physical sense, from you ; but the study of travels will enable you to realise things that are absent to your own minds. And as for the power of

forming ideal pictures, there I refer you to poets, dramatists, and imaginative writers, to the great literature of all times and of all countries. Such studies as these will enable you to live, and to move, and to think, in a world different from the narrow world by which you are surrounded. These studies will open up to you sources of amusement which, I think I may say, will often rise into happiness. I wish you, by the aid of the training which I recommend, to be able to look beyond your own lives, and have pleasure in surroundings different from those in which you move. I want you to be able—and mark this point—to sympathise with other times, to be able to understand the men and women of other countries, and to have the intense enjoyment—an enjoyment which, I am sure, you would all appreciate—of mental change of scene. I do not only want you to know dry facts; I am not only looking to a knowledge of facts, nor chiefly to that knowledge. I want the heart to be stirred as well as the intellect. I want you to feel more and live more than you can do if you only know what surrounds yourselves. I want the action of the imagination, the sympathetic study of history and travels, the broad teaching of the poets, and,

indeed, of the best writers of other times and other countries, to neutralise and check the dwarfing influences of necessarily narrow careers and necessarily stunted lives. That is the point which you will see I mean when I ask you to cultivate the imagination. I want to introduce you to other, wider, and nobler fields of thought, and to open up vistas of other worlds, whence refreshing and bracing breezes will stream upon your minds and souls.

I reject the theory which regards as "stuff and nonsense" all that does not really bear on the immediate practical duties of life. I struggle against the view which assails higher and deeper, aye, and more amusing studies with that shibboleth which we all know so well—"What is the use of all this to us practical men of business?" Mind, I do not decline that challenge. I will speak of the *use* by and by. I will show that the course of training I recommend *is* of the greatest possible practical use; but meanwhile I lay in a protest that this is not the only result by which training can be tried. Its marketable use is not the only test, or even the chief test, to which we ought to look in education; and I decline to have these courses of studies simply tried by the bearing

they may have on the means of gaining a livelihood. And here I think you may fairly note the difference between what I am asking you to do and what many others ask you to do. While I want you to acquire the power of representing to yourselves absent things, many persons, with more authority to speak than I have, beseech you to study what lies around you. The promoters of physical science, for instance, entreat you not to neglect the phenomena which surround you on every side, and ask you to analyse Nature, to make use of Nature, to turn Nature to your purposes, to your greater comfort and power. It would be unjust if I were to omit to say that they also recommend the study of physical science for its ennobling and educational influence on the mind; and I say all honour to these studies. But let another field of work not be neglected—the cultivation of the power of forming ideal pictures and of representing things absent to yourselves and to others.

And do not believe for one moment—I am rather anxious on this point—that the cultivation of this faculty will disgust you or disqualify you for your daily tasks. I hold a very contrary view. I spoke just now of mental change of scene; and

as the body is better for a change of scene and a change of air, so I believe that the mind is also better for occasional changes of mental atmosphere. I do not believe that it is good either for men or women always to be breathing the atmosphere of the business in which they are themselves engaged. You know how a visit to the seaside sometimes brings colour to the cheeks and braces the limbs. Well, so I believe that h at mental change of scene which I recommend will bring colour into your minds, will brace you to greater activity, and will in every way strengthen both your intellectual and your moral faculties. I want you—if I may use the phrase—to breath the bracing ozone of the imagination. And over what worlds will not fancy enable you to roam?—the world of the past, ideal worlds, and other worlds beyond your sight, probably brighter worlds, possibly more interesting worlds than the narrow world in which most of us are compelled to live; at all events, different worlds and worlds that give us change.

And now let me answer an objection which I know is in all your minds, though you may be too complimentary to give audible expression to it. You are no doubt saying to your-

selves, "What in the name of common sense does Mr. Goschen mean? If he thinks that the cultivation of the imagination be better than a knowledge of facts—if it be better to analyse absent things rather than study things present—why, then, not leave imagination to do its work? Our lads and lasses may like this idle doctrine well enough, but why foist it on our business-like Institute?" I will attempt to grapple with this objection. But before I do so I have got one more preliminary remark to make. I am so keen about the cultivation of the imagination that I wish to press into its service, not only the influence of an Institute like this, but home influences—the influence that fathers and mothers may be able to bring to bear upon their children—the influence of every one who has a library—the influence of every one who can speak to the young—even pulpit influence I would exhort to assist in this work, because the cultivation of the imagination is certainly on the side of religion and religious education. And I want to begin very early. Full of my wish to make all familiar with great worlds or little worlds differing from their own, I hold decided opinions even upon the subject of nursery and schoolboy literature. The

imagination is roused even when children are very young, and often the first lessons that are given to young children are of great importance in their after lives. You will expect, perhaps, that, with that disregard of useful knowledge of which I may stand accused, I am sure to be in favour of indiscriminate story-books as appealing to the imagination, and that I preach up the merits of works of fiction promiscuously. This would not represent my feeling in the least. I wish to point out to you that works of fiction, unfortunately, are frequently without any imagination at all. Many is the three-volume novel which you can read through from beginning to end, and your mind will not be lit up with one spark of imagination. What do some of these writers do ? They do that against which I protest. I can bring out my hobby by enlarging on this point. They photograph daily life. They do not introduce their readers to anything beyond daily life. In fact, what course do they take ? They describe characters precisely like the people whom they see every day ; they describe the very clothes worn by the people whom you meet every day ; they describe the very words which may be addressed to themselves ; the very smiles which

may be smiled at themselves ; they describe the very love which they hope may be made to themselves or to their sisters ; and then, at the end, they think they have written a novel. Well, that may be fiction, but it is not imagination. Why, they have not "the power to form ideal pictures," or "to represent to themselves or to others absent things." They only deal with the present. Such novelists do not carry their readers to other worlds. They do not cultivate the imagination of their readers. I think this illustration will give you some glimpse of that at which I am driving. What I want for the young are books and stories which do not simply deal with our daily life. I prefer "Alice in Wonderland," as a book for children, to those little stories of "Tommies" and "Freddies," which are but little photographs of the lives of "Tommies" and "Freddies" who read the books. I like "Grimm's Fairy Tales" better than little nursery novelettes. I like the fancy even of little children to have some larger food than images of their own little lives ; and I confess I am sorry for the children whose imaginations are not sometimes stimulated by beautiful fairy tales, or by other tales which carry them to different worlds from those in which their future

will be passed. Doubtless boys and girls like photographs of the sayings and doings of other boys and girls—school life sketched with realistic fidelity—and doubtless many young people like love stories similar to those through which they may have to pass themselves. But there is little imagination in all this. The facts are fictitious, but the life is real. Do not misunderstand me. It is not that I wish to combine instruction with amusement in what is often a hopeless alliance. I do not wish to stint young people of amusing books. But I will tell you what I do like for boys and girls. I like to see boys and girls amuse themselves with tales of adventure, with stories of gallant deeds and noble men, with stories of the seas, of mountains, of wars, with descriptions of scenes different from those in which they live. But I will make an exception. Sometimes contemporary stories are told with such genial nobleness of aim, and with such purity of spirit, that they are of high moral and mental value, and certainly I should be sorry that any man should deny a boy the intense enjoyment of reading "Tom Brown's School Days," nor would I grudge a girl the deep pleasure and interest of reading the fortunes of "The Heir of Redclyffe."

No doubt stories of our daily lives may frequently be made to answer great and noble purposes, but still, as a general rule, and looking generally to the literature for the young, I hold that what removes them more or less from their daily life is better than what reminds them of it at every step. I like boys to read, for instance, the "Last of the Mohicans"—to sail across the sea with Captain Marryat's tars. I like them to read the tales of the Crusades, or of our own border wars—books of travel in the North, the Arctic regions, in the South, the East, and the West. I like them, in short, to read anything rather than realistic prose, exaggerated or even faithful descriptions of their life of every day. Remember what I am driving at is the cultivation of the power of representing things different from those amongst which we live.

But all this, you will say, is scarcely educational. I maintain, however, that it is educational in a certain sense. The books which are read in the leisure hours are sometimes as educational even as those which are read in the times of study. But I will now apply myself to the studies over which this Institute has an influence, and I will grapple boldly with my task. You will see

that I have hitherto seemed to jumble up fairy tales and history—travels and simple creations of the brain. To my mind they all do a certain work in common. But when I come to serious educational work, let me single out history for special remark. I am an enthusiast for the study of history, and I entreat you to give it as much attention as you can at this place. You will see that my whole argument tends to the study of history and of general literature, not for the sake of the facts alone, not for mere knowledge, but for their influence on the mind. History may be dry and technical if you confine yourself to the chronological order of facts—if you study only to know what actually took place at certain dates. I am sure we have all suffered from the infliction of skeleton histories—excellent tests of patience, but I am afraid as little exciting to the imagination as any other study in which any one can possibly engage. What I am looking to is rather the colouring of history—the familiarity with times gone by, with the characters, the passions, the thoughts and aspirations of men who have gone before us. History with that life and colour—and many historians of the present day write histories which fulfil these

conditions — history with that life and colour cultivates the imagination as much and better than many of the best romances. When thus written, and when once the reader is fairly launched into it, history is as absorbing as a novel, and more amusing and interesting than many a tale. I will be quite candid with you. I am something of a novel reader myself. I admit that I like reading a novel occasionally. The fact is, there is one difference between a novel and a history which is in favour of the former at the first start. In a history the first fifty pages are often intolerably dull, and it is the opening which, to use a familiar expression, chokes off half the readers. You generally have some preliminary description — of the state of Europe, for instance, or of the state of India, or the state of France, or some other country at a given time. You don't come to the main point—you don't come to what interests you at first sight; and thus many persons are frightened off before they thoroughly get into the book, and they throw aside a history, and characterise it as being very dull. Now, in a novel you very often begin to enjoy yourself at the very first page. Still, when I have taken up some interesting history—for instance, lately I

have been reading "Kaye's History of the Sepoy War"—and when I have got over the first few introductory pages, which are a little heavy, I say to myself, How is it possible that a man of sense can spend his time on reading novels when there are histories of this absorbing interest, which are so vastly more entertaining, so vastly more instructive, and so much better for the mind than any novel? Believe me, an intelligent and a systematic study of history contains a vast resource of interest and amusement to all those who will embark in it. Let me explain a little more. Histories, if you only deal with chronological details, you may possibly find to be exceedingly like "Bradshaw's Railway Guide"—very confusing, very uninteresting in themselves, only useful sometimes in enabling you to know how to go from one period to another—to make an historical journey. Or you might compare these general surveys of history of which I was speaking to a skeleton map of a country of which you know very little. You see the towns noted down. They are but uninteresting spots on the map. They convey nothing to you; they don't interest you. But if you have travelled in that country, if you know the towns mentioned on the map,

then you pore over the map with a very different interest. It gives you real personal pleasure ; your mind and imagination recall the country itself. So you will find that the grand secret to enjoy history is to get beyond the outlines, to be thoroughly familiar with a particular period, to saturate yourselves with the facts, the events, the circumstances, and the personages which belong to a certain time in history. When you have done this, the men and women of that period become your personal friends ; you take an intense delight in their society, and you experience a sense of pleasure equivalent to what is given by any novel. I heard yesterday an anecdote of a lady who had lived a great deal in political circles. She had received from a friend a book about Sir Thomas More. When she had read it, she wrote back and thanked the sender of the book, telling him with what delight she had perused it, and adding, " Sir Thomas More and Erasmus are particularly intimate friends of mine." She was so well acquainted with that period, that all that was written about it came home to her heart—she knew it, she had lived in it, and it had a living interest for her. That is the mode and manner in which I would recom-

mend you to study history. Let me be more precise. I would not gallop through histories any more than I would through a country if I wanted to explore it. I would take a particular period, and read every book bearing on that particular period which my library supplied me, and which I had time to read. Then I would read the poets who had written in the same period. I should read the dramas relating to that period, and thus I should saturate myself with everything which was connected with it, and by that means I would acquire that power which I value, which I want you to have individually, and which I should like every English man and woman to have as far as they could, namely, the power of being able to live in other times and sympathise with other times, and to sympathise with persons and races and influences different from those amongst which we move.

And do not think that in such studies you lose your time. Are there fathers and mothers here who hold that it is a dangerous doctrine which I preach? If so, I hope I may be able to reassure them; for I hold that in all spheres and all classes culture of this kind is of the highest value, and that it does not disqualify, but the reverse, for

business life. Amongst the wealthier classes of business men, I rejoice to think that prejudice against culture as being dangerous to business is rapidly dying out, and that a University education is no longer regarded with suspicion. "What do men learn at Oxford and Cambridge that will fit them for business?" was formerly often asked; but I do not think this question is put quite so often now. I will tell you what once occurred to myself in regard to this point. Some eight years ago I met a distinguished modern poet, calling at the same house where I was calling, and he asked, "What becomes of all the Senior Wranglers and of all the Oxford First Class men? One does not hear of them in after-life." I ventured very modestly to say in reply that, not being a Cambridge man, I could not speak on behalf of Cambridge men; but as to Oxford I was able to inform him that eight of her First Class men were at that moment in Her Majesty's Cabinet.

But you may say, "This is all very well for the *greater* affairs of life, but as regards the general rough-and-tumble of business life, why should you have this cultivation? Is it not dangerous, and does it not rather hamper a young man when he goes into business life?" Let me give you

another instance on this point, and you will forgive me if it is somewhat of a personal character ; but it may come home to some of the young men here more forcibly than the most eloquent generalisation. My own father came over to England as a very young man, with one friend as young as himself, and with very little more money in his pocket than a great many of the students here, I dare say, possess ; and he has told me, half in joke and half in earnest, that he was obliged to found a firm because he wrote such a bad hand that no one would take him for a clerk. But he was steeped to the lips in intellectual culture. In his father's house, as a boy, he had met all the great literary men of the best period of German literature. He had heard Schiller read his own plays. He had listened to the conversation of great thinkers and great poets. He was a good historian, an acute critic, well versed in literature, and a very good musician to boot. But did this stand in his way as a young man coming over to London with a view to found a business ? Has it stood in his way of founding a firm of which I, as his son, am very proud ? It did not stand in his way. On the contrary, it aided his success ; and, with this before me, I hope you will say that

I am able to speak with affectionate conviction of the fact that culture will not interfere with the due discharge of the duties of business men in any sphere of business life.

I will not add to what I have said about the great increase of happiness and amusement to be gained for your own leisure in after-life if you follow the studies I have named. It is most certainly for your happiness and advantage ; but you may remember that I used much stronger language than this. I said it was not only of advantage for the young themselves, but for the national advantage, that imaginative culture should be considered as one of the aims of education. I have still got to make this point good. Consider what are the duties of this country in which we live. Let me now take you away from Liverpool—away even from England—and ask you to look at our imperial duties—at our colonies, at our vast empire, at our foreign relations—and then I want you to ask yourselves whether it is important or not that Englishmen shall be able to realise to themselves what is not immediately around them, that they shall be able to transport themselves in imagination to other countries over which they rule. It is not sufficient for English-

men to think only of their own surroundings. There was a time when the destinies of England used to be wielded by a few individual men, or by small coteries of trained statesmen. India was governed for years externally to the influence of public opinion. But that is past now. Public opinion is now stepping in ; and, if public opinion steps in, I wish that public opinion to be properly trained. Why, even ministers for foreign affairs now declare that they wait the behests of the public, their employers, before they take any decided step. If public opinion assumes these responsibilities, again I say, " Let us look to the formation of that public opinion, and see that the young generation of Englishmen are trained properly for the discharge of these functions." Parliament is more and more sharing with the executive Government of the country the duties of administration, and the press and the public are more and more sharing this duty with Parliament. Therefore you will understand the importance I attach to the training of the coming generation, not only in useful knowledge, but in all that they ought to know and ought to be able to feel and think when they are discharging imperial duties.

And, I ask, by what power can this result be better obtained than by the intelligent study of history and of modes of thought which lie beyond our own immediate range? It is no easy thing for democracies to rule wisely and satisfactorily self-governing colonies or subject races. Imagination, in its highest and broadest sense, is necessary for the noble discharge of imperial duties. The governing classes—and we are all governing classes now—should be able to represent to themselves absent things—all the impulses, and sympathies, and passions of other races different from themselves. To ignore this, to be narrow-minded, is a very great national danger. Narrow-mindedness lost us in times past the American Colonies. Statesmen were not able to sympathise with, or throw themselves into, the position of these Colonies; they could not represent to themselves absent things; and they thought that this England of ours, with what they learned here, was sufficient for their guidance in the discharge of their imperial duties. It is not enough. We must look beyond our own local surroundings. In the study of history you will also be able to meet the ignorance which may possibly prevail in many places with regard to our

own history and our own colonial empire. What sentiment brings down a popular audience more thoroughly than when a great statesman or popular orator exclaims, "We are an historic people?" May I be permitted humbly to suggest that, if we are a great historic people, we may with advantage study and know our own history? May I ask that, if we are an historic people, we may take advantage of our history as a lesson for the future? and that, if we are an imperial people, we may also study and lay to heart and know the conditions of some of the races and the colonies over which we rule? I wonder how much many of us know of the way in which the Indian Empire was originally won and maintained. I dare say some of you reproach me in your hearts, and say, "We know all about it;" and why? because everybody—at any rate, a great many people—have read the essays of Lord Macaulay on Clyde and Warren Hastings; but if these two essays had not been written, I wonder how much would be known of the history of India? I do not do wrong, then, I think, if I recommend the pupils of this Institute to push the study of our own national history, and to enter and throw themselves into that study with

patriotism and alacrity. It is the duty of citizens to read and know their own past. I want to stimulate a habit of mind which is capable of apprehending and sympathising with a state of things different from that which surrounds us.

I do not know whether it is an apocryphal story or not that a distinguished statesman once said that a page of the *Times* was more worth reading than the whole of *Thucydides*. If that was ever said, I should reply, "No, a thousand times No." That sentiment embodies the very tone of mind against which I am contending. It means that it is important to give an exclusive study to that which is surrounding us, and that we have less to do with the great past. Yes, if our duty and our pleasure were to deal only with matters that lie around ourselves—if, for instance, in Parliament, we had only to pass gas and water Bills, to improve tariffs, to deal with the material aspects of the present, and the growing resources which railroads and telegraphs bestow—then the hasty survey of passing events which the daily journals supply might be more useful to us than the history of an Athenian war, even though that history were written with spirit-stirring eloquence and patriotism, and were full of sound political

reflections which remain true throughout eternal time. But if we have more to do than this, if we have not only to deal with Englishmen precisely like ourselves—if English public opinion and English statesmen have not only to deal with Englishmen who are registered at their birth by an English Registrar-General, then vaccinated according to an English Act of Parliament, and sent, under another English Act of Parliament, through elementary schools, and dealt with for the remainder of their lives under English Acts of Parliament; but if, besides, we have to deal with subject races who are more like the men described by Herodotus than average London or Liverpool men, then I hope you will understand how important it is that we should cultivate the capacity of understanding what others think and do, and so be able to lift ourselves beyond the ordinary range of daily life.

Men who know little of our previous history, and are feeble in their power to imagine—that is, to represent to themselves the situations and views of other nations—are what I consider a dangerous element in the formation of public opinion. Those men are still more dangerous if, because they know very little, and because they

are somewhat local and narrow-minded, they fancy themselves to be practical men. I am often frightened when, upon some great question, I hear a man say, "I am going to take a very business-like view of this question." It is almost as bad as when a man, upon some question of propriety, says he is going to look at it as a man of the world. I then always suspect the judgment he is going to give. When a man says, "I am going to look at a great question as a business man," it is ten to one he means, "I am not going to be gulled by any of your grand generalisations; I am not going to be misled by historical parallels, or seduced by any rhetorical phrases. I do not wish to be told what foreign nations are thinking of or are likely to do. I wish to judge of this as a sensible man of business. I know the effect such and such a line of policy will have on trade and on the funds, and that is enough for me." Now, I have sometimes hoped that I might have claimed myself to be a business man, or a business-like man; and most of you will consider yourselves the same; and I say that is prostituting the name of "business-like" to confound it, as it is often done, with a narrow-minded view of imperial questions. That is not business-like at

all; it is very unbusiness-like. Call it by whatever name you will, whether narrow-mindedness or not, I consider that to judge from hand to mouth of all our great questions is a very dangerous tendency—a tendency which is fostered by ignorance of the great principles of human action, and of the former teaching of the history of the world. Again, you will think me very persistent. The study of history will correct these tendencies, and will mitigate the influence of any narrow-minded judgment of passing events. Some newspapers, for instance—I am speaking entirely hypothetically—often take alarm, and begin to think they ought to write down the power of England. They begin to minimise our power, and they say, “What can England do? Look at the size of our little island. Look at the statistical lists of our ships and guns, of our men and armies. What can we do? *After all*, we are very small in numbers.” Again, I dislike a sentence which begins with “after all,” because I know that when a man begins to say “after all” he means that he will not meet me on my own ground, but that he is going to meet me on some other ground totally different from that which is the subject of our argument.

Well, it is said, “ ‘ After all,’ what can England do ? ” Now, I should like the public sometimes to be able, when it is asked “ what can England do,” to check this appeal to contemporary statistics by an intelligent recollection of the statistics of the past. I do not say that I want England to do anything, but I do not want it to be laid down that England *can not* do anything. I rebel against this tendency of always writing down our own country, as if our powers were insufficient. Study history as I ask you, and you will be able to answer those who urge objections of this kind. Study the history of the past, and see what England has done at times when neither her population nor her wealth was such as it is at present, and you will wonder when it is said that England, “ after all,” is a small country.

How many of you in this room know what the population of this country was in the great Napoleonic times, when England took the lead, and when newspapers did not point to the size of the island and the smallness of the population as compared with the population of other countries ? Our population at the present time is about 33,000,000, probably more. The population of Great Britain in 1801, when the census was

taken, including the armies serving abroad, was under 11,000,000,* and I ask you to remember the historical lessons which that great time teaches. Remember what England, with that population, was enabled to do, and what weight her counsels had in Europe and throughout the world. To my mind, the teaching of history is this, that, notwithstanding Krupp guns and Palliser shells; notwithstanding Martini and Chassepot rifles; notwithstanding ironclads and torpedoes; notwithstanding field telegraphs and balloons; and notwithstanding that one great European Power has lost her influence, and another great Power has gained influence in Europe; notwithstanding all this, the teaching of history is, that a great country of 33,000,000 of inhabitants, unsurpassed in wealth, has no business to depreciate her own power or minimise those great efforts which, if need be, but only if need be and if right be, she will venture to put forth.

But perhaps some of you may think that I have been wasting my pains. You may think that,

* The census of Ireland was not taken in 1801, so that the total population of Great Britain and Ireland at that date cannot be stated.

though I have been pleading in favour of the cultivation of the imagination amongst the English people, the results I aim at have been achieved to a very considerable extent already, and that we are highly imaginative because, as I admit, we are becoming a highly sentimental and susceptible people. I admit that it is very unfair on the part of foreigners continually to say, as they do say, that Englishmen are not prepared ever to make sacrifices for an idea. I consider that England, especially in late generations, has certainly been ready to make considerable sacrifices, not only on material grounds, but on moral grounds. For instance, take the abolition of the Slave Trade. That was an effort which England made from the sincerest and purest motives of conviction and morality; but nearly all Continental writers disbelieve in the self-sacrificing nature of that great measure, and declare that we were guided by self-interest. They are entirely deceived. Where the country's feelings have been touched, we have again and again been willing to make considerable sacrifices, and we should again be prepared to make such sacrifices in the cause of right and morality. But I do not admit that susceptibility and sentiment are at all

equivalent to that imaginative capacity with which I have been dealing. I do not at all wish to stimulate further what I may call the susceptible side of English politics, because I think we have gone far enough in that direction. I prefer that manly and sturdy national character which I see written in many of the great histories I have recommended you to study, and I do not at all consider that the cultivation of the power of representing to yourselves absent things, and of being able to sympathise with and to understand the necessities of our colonies and of other countries, and to take generally that wider and broader view that I have recommended, are at all identical with the development of a sentimental character in politics—a tendency which I, for one, view with some alarm.

Well, now, I am afraid that I have taken you a very long way. I began with the nursery, and I am afraid I have launched you in the end into a very wide field indeed. I might have followed up my argument by showing the necessity, even for many serious domestic questions, of cultivating the faculty to which I have alluded. I might almost venture to say that a House of Commons without imagination would, to my mind, be a bad

House of Commons and a dangerous House of Commons. A church without imagination would be a church without life and without the power of retaining its hold upon its flocks. Imagination, in the sense which I have described, is necessary everywhere, and perhaps we have too little of it now in great many departments of life ; and I will tell you why. Because we are all too much oppressed with detail—because, in the study of detail, and in the study of useful knowledge, we frequently too much ignore and too much forget the broader lines of study, and the more important generalisations which neither statesmen nor electors, nor indeed any class, ought ever to lose sight of. And so I hope I have been justified, when addressing a great institution such as this, with two thousand students whom it trains—I hope I have been justified, not only in looking to the actual work which is being performed within your walls, but also in venturing to put before you certain general ideas as to the faculties which ought to be developed, and studies which ought to be pursued. And you will not think because I have mainly insisted on one particular line of thought, that I therefore ignore the immense importance of your other studies ; I have simply

thought it might be well on this occasion that the other side should be put forward for once, and that I might fairly make as strong a plea as I could for the cultivation of studies on which I, in my heart, believe so much depends. Full of this conviction, I confidently ask you all to apply yourselves to these studies, both at home, in this Institute, in your public libraries, by every available means. Once more let me say to you that a livelihood is not a life, and, believe me, if you devote yourselves to such studies—if you are able to cultivate that power which I have asked you to cultivate—you will find that it will make you better citizens, more ardent patriots, and better and happier men and women.



CONGRESS
0 019 847 457 5